MARVEL
DOCTOR STRANGE
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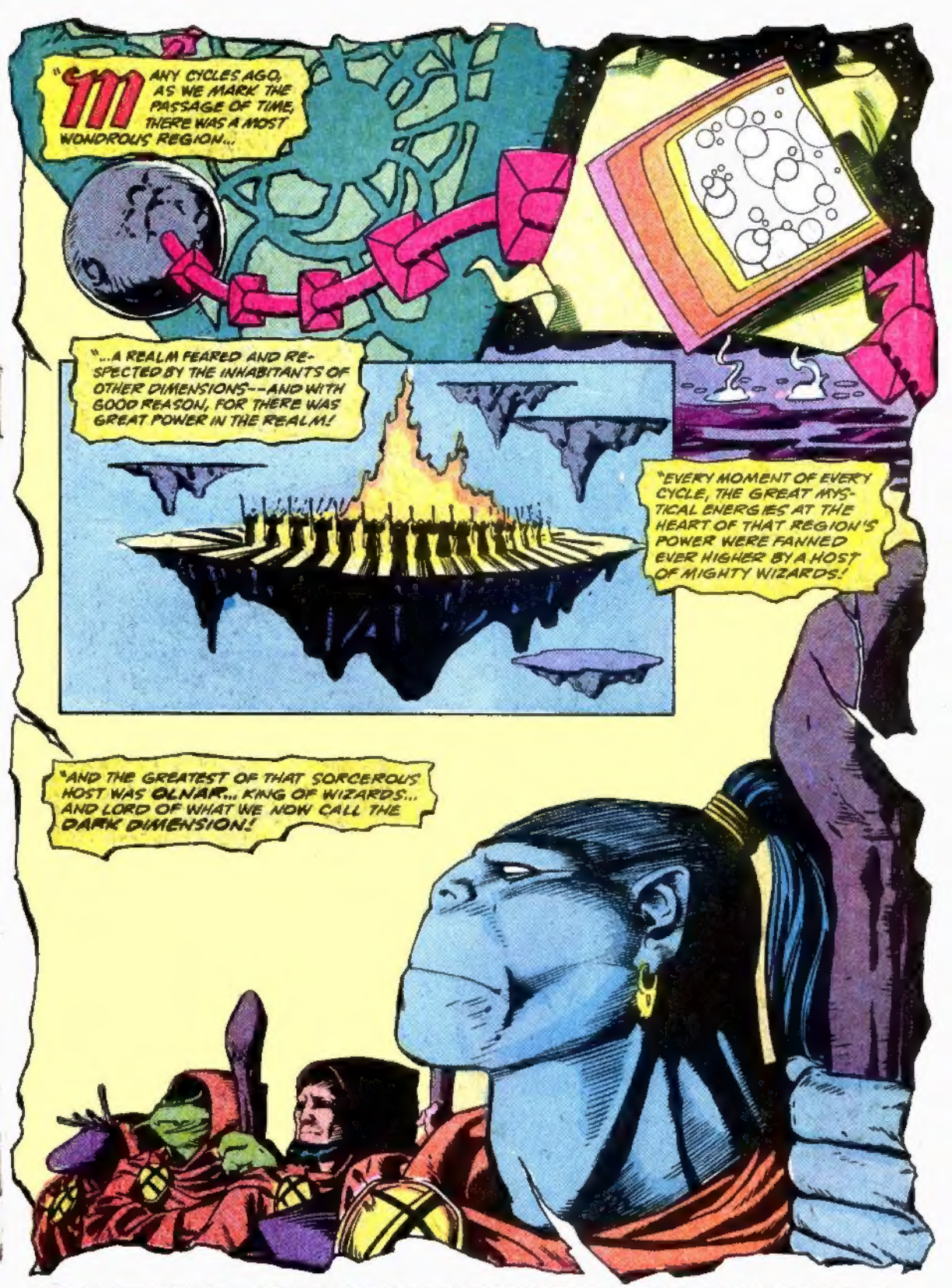
"MANY CYCLES AGO, AS WE MARK THE PASSAGE OF TIME, THERE WAS A MOST WONDROUS REGION...
"...A REALM FEARED AND RESPECTED BY THE INHABITANTS OF OTHER DIMENSIONS--AND WITH GOOD REASON, FOR THERE WAS GREAT POWER IN THE REALM!
"EVERY MOMENT OF EVERY CYCLE, THE GREAT MYSTICAL ENERGIES AT THE HEART OF THAT REGION'S POWER WERE FANNED EVER HIGHER BY A HOST OF MIGHTY WIZARDS!
"AND THE GREATEST OF THAT SORCEROUS HOST WAS OLNAR... KING OF WIZARDS... AND LORD OF WHAT WE NOW CALL THE DARK DIMENSION!

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"IT WAS NEAR THE END OF THE 28TH CYCLE OF OLNAR'S REIGN THAT THE TWO STRANGERS CAME BEFORE THE WIZARD-KING'S AZURE THRONE, ASKING FOR SANCTUARY.

"BROTHER AND SISTER WERE THEY, EXILES FROM THE FABLED DIMENSION OF THE FALTINE. AND THEY PROMISED TO SHOW OLNAR NEW WAYS OF POWER... WAYS WHICH, THEY SAID, WOULD EXPAND THE VERY BOUNDARIES OF HIS REALM!

"UPON HEARING THIS, THERE WAS GREAT TUMULT AND DISSENSION AMONG THE HOST OF WIZARDS. THEY WARNED OLNAR AGAINST TRUSTING THE EXILES.

"BUT OLNAR WAS INTRIGUED BY THE PAIR'S OFFER, AND-- IGNORING ALL PROTESTS, HE GRANTED THE TWO HIGH STATUS IN THE REALM.

"IN RETURN, THEY FULFILLED THEIR PROMISE...SOARING ACROSS THE DIMENSION WITH OLNAR, SHOWING HIM HOW TO BREAK DOWN THE BARRIERS BETWEEN WORLDS!

"EVERYWHERE OLNAR WENT, HIS REALM GREW... ABSORBING OTHER DIMENSIONS, OTHER REALITIES.

"MIDWAY THROUGH THE 29TH CYCLE OF OLNAR'S RULE, TRAGEDY STRUCK. A NEWLY ANNEXED PORTION OF THE DIMENSION WAS FOUND-- TOO LATE-- TO BE THE DOMAIN OF THOSE SAVAGE CREATURES WE CALL THE MINDLESS ONES!

"TIRELESS AND INDESTRUCTIBLE, THE MINDLESS ONES SWEPT ACROSS THE REALM, DESTROYING ALL IN THEIR PATH. AND FIRST TO PERISH WAS OLNAR HIMSELF!

"THOSE OF THE WIZARD-HOST WHO HAD FLED BEFORE THE SLAUGHTER WERE QUICK TO BLAME OLNAR'S FALTINIAN ADVISERS.
*THE BROTHER AND SISTER WHO HAD JUST BARELY ESCAPED INJURY AT OLNAR'S SIDE SOMEHOW SENSED THAT THE SURVIVING WIZARDS WOULD NEXT BAND TOGETHER AGAINST THEM, RATHER THAN AGAINST THE MINDLESS ONES.
"BUT THEY WERE TOO CLEVER FOR THE OLD FOOLS, AND STRUCK FIRST, BEFORE THEY COULD BE OVERCOME.
*AND THEN, FRESH FROM FACING THE TREACHEROUS HOST, THE FALTINIANS COMBINED THEIR MAGIC... ERECTING THE GREAT MYSTIC BARRIER WHICH HOLDS THE MINDLESS ONES IN CHECK TO THIS DAY!
*"THEY HAD SAVED THE REALM... BUT NOT WITHOUT SOME COST TO THEMSELVES. UMAR -- THE YOUNGER OF THE TWO -- HAD BEEN WEAKENED CONSIDERABLY. IT WOULD BE MANY CYCLES BEFORE HER FULL POWER RETURNED.

"SAFE FROM THE CEASELESS ATTACK OF THE MINDLESS ONES, THE CITIZENS OF THE REALM RALLIED TO THE SUPPORT OF THEIR SAVIORS.
"WITH THE WIZARD-HOST ALL BUT BROKEN, AND OLNAR'S INFANT CHILD TOO YOUNG TO RULE, THE ELDER FALTINIAN WAS DECLARED REGENT.
"STILL, THOUGH, THE WIZARD-HOST REFUSED TO SUPPORT THE NEW RULER--AND SOME FEARED THAT THE REALM'S GREAT MYSTIC ENERGY WOULD FALTER. BUT THE NEW RULER KNEW NO SUCH FEAR!
"'THESE SHALL BE MY FLAMES OF REGENCY! FROM THIS MOMENT FORWARD, THEY SHALL MARK THE RULER OF THIS REALM! SO SPEAKS DORMAMMU, LORD OF THE DARK DIMENSION!'
"AND SO, IT CAME TO PASS.
"'LET THE FIRES BURN BRIGHTER!' HE CRIED. 'LET US BE AS ONE!'
"UPON THE REMAINING FEW OF THE WIZARD-HOSTS, DORMAMU PLACED A SPELL OF SILENCE--AND SENT THEM TO WANDER THROUGH THE REALM, SHUNNED AS OUTCASTS..."

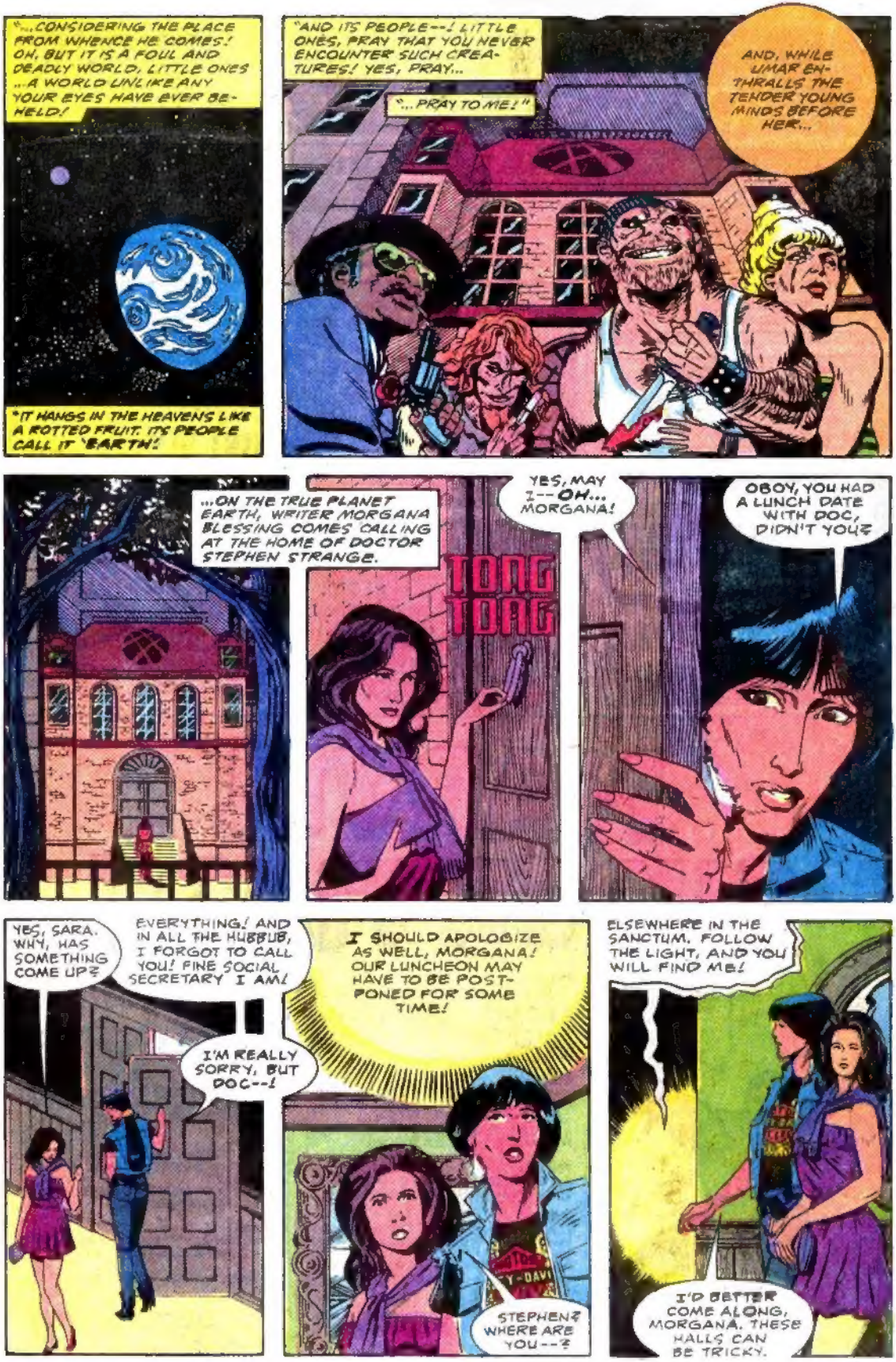
STAN LEE PRESENTS A BIZARRE JOURNEY:

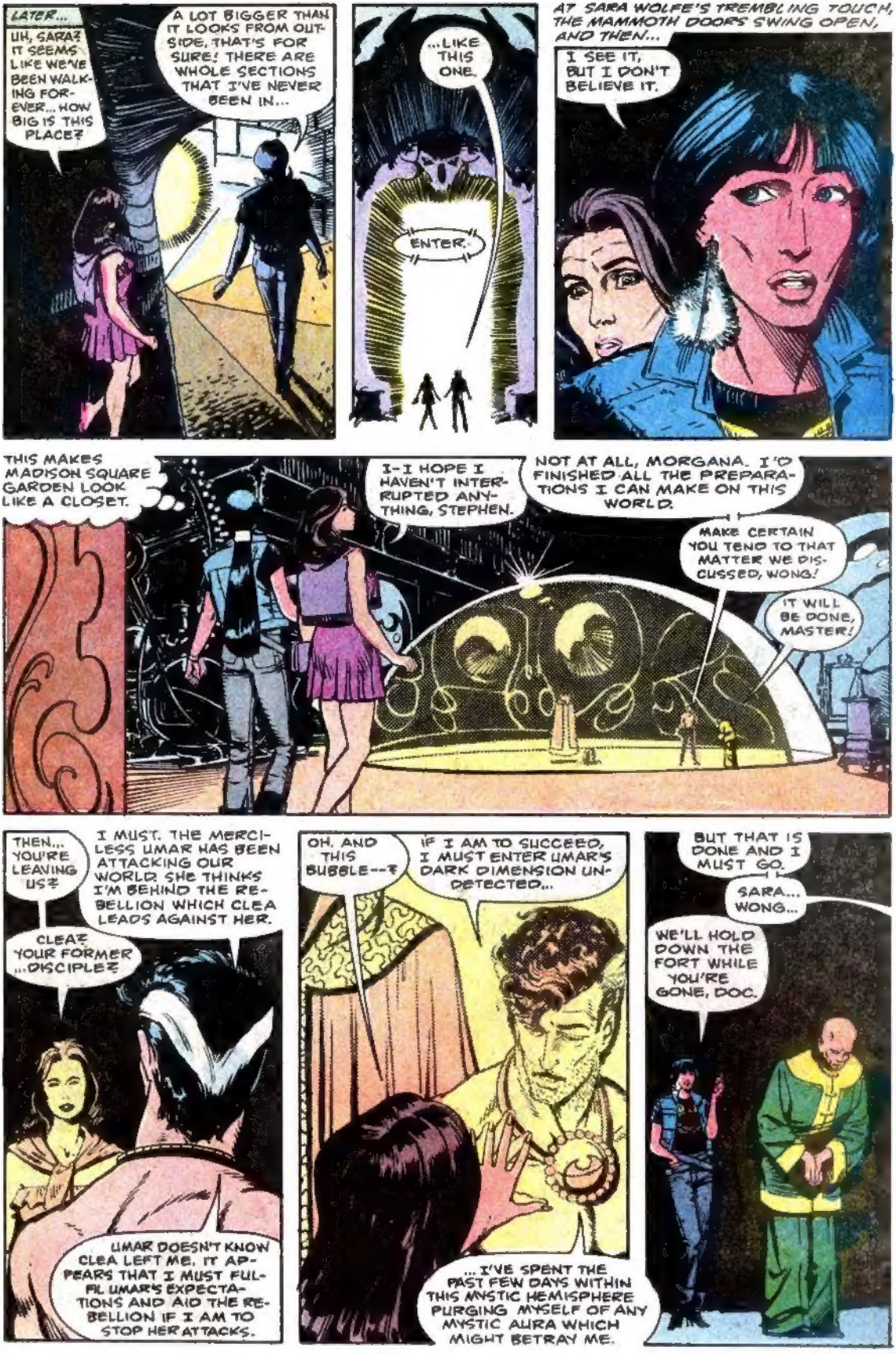
INTO THE DARK DIMENSION

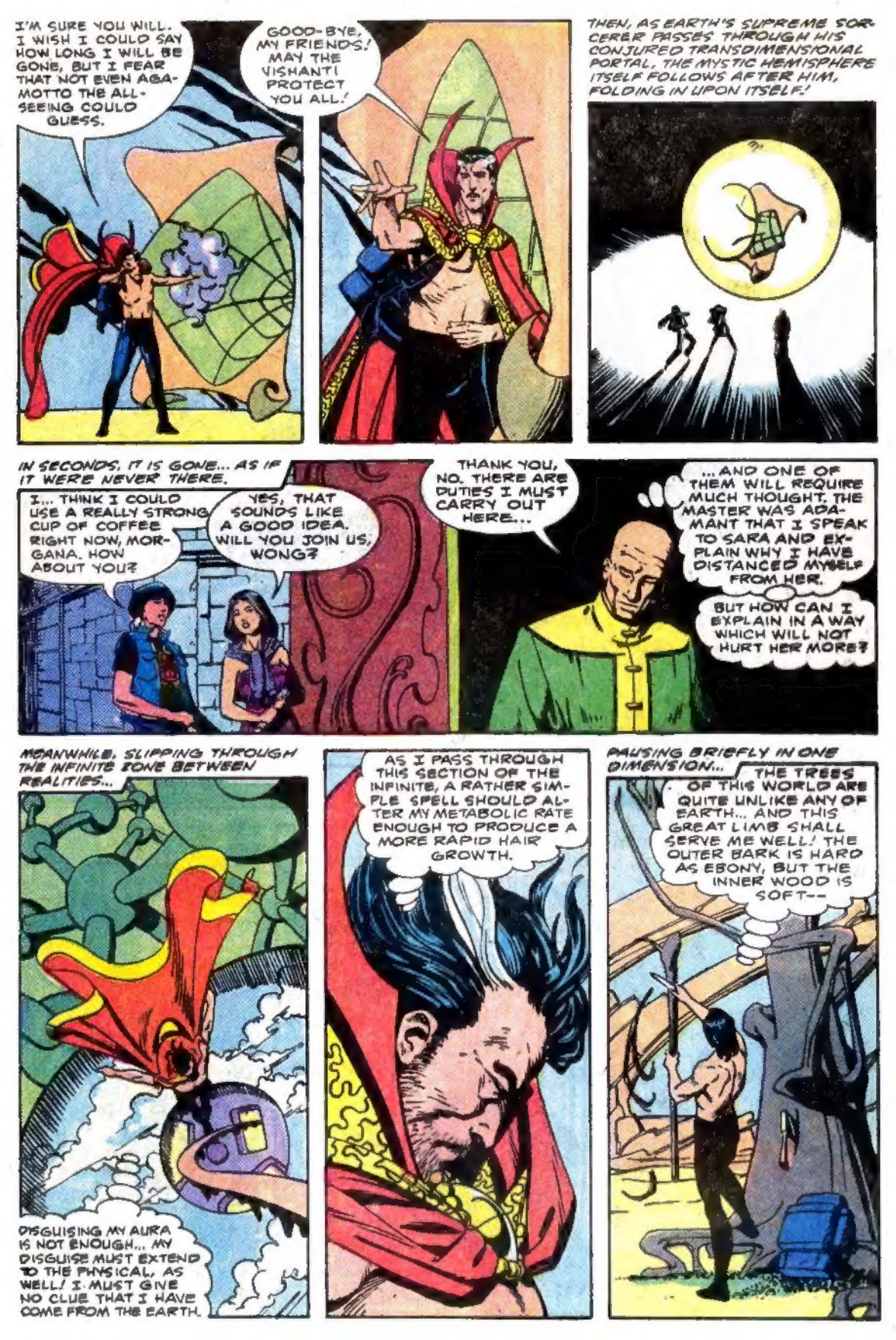
ROGER STERN-WRITER· PAUL SMITH-ARTIST
JOHN WORKMAN-LETTERER· BOB SHAREN-COLORIST· CARL POTTS-EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF!

..THUS DID THE HOUSE OF DORMAMMU COME TO BE KNOWN AND FEARED. HERE, DEEP WITHIN THE SHADOW OF THE G'URANTHIC GUARDIAN, DORMAMMU PLACED HIS AZURE THRONE AND ESTABLISHED HIS PALACE ROYAL.
HERE HAS DWELT THE POWER OF THE DARK DIMENSION EVER SINCE. WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR MORE?
OH, YES, INSTRUCTOR... PLEASE!

VERY WELL. BUT FIRST... CAN YOU TELL ME WHO NOW RULES OUR REALM?
YES, INSTRUCTOR--THE MIGHTY UMAR!
DORMAMMU DISAPPEARED... YOU TOLD US THAT HE WENT ON A QUEST AND NEVER RETURNED!
BUT THE FLAMES OF REGENCY APPEARED ABOUT UMAR, AND SHE LEADS US NOW... EVEN BETTER THAN DORMAMMU DID, YOU SAID!
INSTRUCTOR! IT... IT'S HER! THE MOST HIGH ...UMAR!!
O GREAT AND MIGHTY MISTRESS, WE BASK IN THE GLOW OF YOUR POWER!
ARISE, LITTLE ONES! UMAR WOULD SEE YOUR HAPPY FACES!
AH, YOUTH. EVER THE HOPE OF THE REALM. I COULD NOT HELP BUT HEAR THEIR LESSON, INSTRUCTOR. YOU HAVE TAUGHT THEM WELL.
OURS IS INDEED A WONDROUS DIMENSION, LITTLE ONES. BUT ALAS, THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD OPPOSE US... TREACHEROUS SOULS WHO WOULD SET US AGAINST ONE ANOTHER. DO YOU KNOW OF WHOM I SPEAK, LITTLE ONES?
YOU MEAN THE REBELS! INSTRUCTOR TOLD US ALL ABOUT THEM!
SHE SAID THEY WERE REAL MEAN, AND THEY WANTED TO HURT YOU AND US AND EVERYONE!
WHY DO THEY WANT TO DO THAT, MISTRESS?
BECAUSE, MY LOVELY ONES, THEY HAVE BEEN LED ASTRAY BY AN EVIL SORCERER FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION! HE HAS WARPED THEIR SENSE OF VALUES AND TURNED THEM AGAINST US ALL!
HE AND OTHERS LIKE HIM HAVE OPPOSED US FOR MANY CYCLES! IF EVER YOU SHOULD SEE HIM, RUN AND TELL YOUR PARENTS AT ONCE... AND DO NOT LISTEN TO HIM!
YOU WILL HEAR ONLY LIES FROM THE LIPS OF DOCTOR STRANGE! BUT THAT IS NOT SURPRISING...


"...CONSIDERING THE PLACE FROM WHENCE HE COMES! OH, BUT IT IS A FOUL AND DEADLY WORLD, LITTLE ONES ...A WORLD UNLIKE ANY YOUR EYES HAVE EVER BEHELD!
"IT HANGS IN THE HEAVENS LIKE A ROTTED FRUIT. ITS PEOPLE CALL IT 'EARTH!'
"AND ITS PEOPLE--! LITTLE ONES, PRAY THAT YOU NEVER ENCOUNTER SUCH CREATURES! YES, PRAY...
"...PRAY TO ME!"
AND, WHILE UMAR ENTHRALLS THE TENDER YOUNG MINDS BEFORE HER...
...ON THE TRUE PLANET EARTH, WRITER MORGANA BLESSING COMES CALLING AT THE HOME OF DOCTOR STEPHEN STRANGE.
TONG TONG
YES, MAY I--OH... MORGANA!
OBOY, YOU HAD A LUNCH DATE WITH DOC, DIDN'T YOU?
YES, SARA. WHY, HAS SOMETHING COME UP?
EVERYTHING! AND IN ALL THE HUBBUB, I FORGOT TO CALL YOU! FINE SOCIAL SECRETARY I AM!
I'M REALLY SORRY, BUT DOC--!
I SHOULD APOLOGIZE AS WELL, MORGANA! OUR LUNCHEON MAY HAVE TO BE POSTPONED FOR SOME TIME!
STEPHEN? WHERE ARE YOU--?
ELSEWHERE IN THE SANCTUM. FOLLOW THE LIGHT, AND YOU WILL FIND ME!
I'D BETTER COME ALONG, MORGANA. THESE HALLS CAN BE TRICKY.


LATER...
UH, SARA? IT SEEMS LIKE WE'VE BEEN WALKING FOREVER... HOW BIG IS THIS PLACE?
A LOT BIGGER THAN IT LOOKS FROM OUTSIDE, THAT'S FOR SURE! THERE ARE WHOLE SECTIONS THAT I'VE NEVER BEEN IN...
...LIKE THIS ONE.
ENTER.
AT SARA WOLFE'S TREMBLING TOUCH, THE MAMMOTH DOORS SWING OPEN, AND THEN...
I SEE IT, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE IT.
THIS MAKES MADISON SQUARE GARDEN LOOK LIKE A CLOSET.
I-I HOPE I HAVEN'T INTERRUPTED ANYTHING, STEPHEN.
NOT AT ALL, MORGANA. I'D FINISHED ALL THE PREPARATIONS I CAN MAKE ON THIS WORLD.
MAKE CERTAIN YOU TEND TO THAT MATTER WE DISCUSSED, WONG!
IT WILL BE DONE, MASTER!
THEN... YOU'RE LEAVING US?
I MUST. THE MERCILESS UMAR HAS BEEN ATTACKING OUR WORLD. SHE THINKS I'M BEHIND THE REBELLION WHICH CLEA LEADS AGAINST HER.
CLEA? YOUR FORMER ...DISCIPLE?
UMAR DOESN'T KNOW CLEA LEFT ME. IT APPEARS THAT I MUST FULFIL UMAR'S EXPECTATIONS AND AID THE REBELLION IF I AM TO STOP HER ATTACKS.
OH, AND THIS BUBBLE--?
IF I AM TO SUCCEED, I MUST ENTER UMAR'S DARK DIMENSION UNDETECTED...
...I'VE SPENT THE PAST FEW DAYS WITHIN THIS MYSTIC HEMISPHERE PURGING MYSELF OF ANY MYSTIC AURA WHICH MIGHT BETRAY ME.
BUT THAT IS DONE AND I MUST GO.
SARA... WONG...
WE'LL HOLD DOWN THE FORT WHILE YOU'RE GONE, DOC.


I'M SURE YOU WILL. I WISH I COULD SAY HOW LONG I WILL BE GONE, BUT I FEAR THAT NOT EVEN AGAMOTTO THE ALL-SEEING COULD GUESS.
GOOD-BYE, MY FRIENDS! MAY THE VISHANTI PROTECT YOU ALL!
THEN, AS EARTH'S SUPREME SORCERER PASSES THROUGH HIS CONJURED TRANSDIMENSIONAL PORTAL, THE MYSTIC HEMISPHERE ITSELF FOLLOWS AFTER HIM, FOLDING IN UPON ITSELF!
IN SECONDS, IT IS GONE... AS IF IT WERE NEVER THERE.
I... THINK I COULD USE A REALLY STRONG CUP OF COFFEE RIGHT NOW, MORGANA. HOW ABOUT YOU?
YES, THAT SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD IDEA. WILL YOU JOIN US, WONG?
THANK YOU, NO. THERE ARE DUTIES I MUST CARRY OUT HERE...
...AND ONE OF THEM WILL REQUIRE MUCH THOUGHT. THE MASTER WAS ADAMANT THAT I SPEAK TO SARA AND EXPLAIN WHY I HAVE DISTANCED MYSELF FROM HER.
BUT HOW CAN I EXPLAIN IN A WAY WHICH WILL NOT HURT HER MORE?
MEANWHILE, SLIPPING THROUGH THE INFINITE ZONE BETWEEN REALITIES...
DISGUISING MY AURA IS NOT ENOUGH... MY DISGUISE MUST EXTEND TO THE PHYSICAL, AS WELL! I MUST GIVE NO CLUE THAT I HAVE COME FROM THE EARTH.
AS I PASS THROUGH THIS SECTION OF THE INFINITE, A RATHER SIMPLE SPELL SHOULD ALTER MY METABOLIC RATE ENOUGH TO PRODUCE A MORE RAPID HAIR GROWTH.
PAUSING BRIEFLY IN ONE DIMENSION...
THE TREES OF THIS WORLD ARE QUITE UNLIKE ANY OF EARTH... AND THIS GREAT LIMB SHALL SERVE ME WELL! THE OUTER BARK IS HARD AS EBONY, BUT THE INNER WOOD IS SOFT--

--AND EASILY HOLLOWED OUT. WITH A BIT OF CAREFUL ROLL NG
MY CLOAK OF LEVITATION CAN EASILY BE HIDDEN WITHIN.
THEN, ON YET ANOTHER PLANE...
ONE FINAL CLEANSING N THESE WATERS..
. AND I AM AT LAST PREPARED TO ENTER THE DARK DIMENSION!
BUT, EVEN AS THE MYSTIC READIES HIMSELF...
... IN A REMOTE CORNER OF UMAR'S DOMAIN-- IN A PROTECTIVE CRIMSON DOME, HIDDEN DEEP IN THE HEART OF THE TERRITORY OF THE MINDLESS ONES--
-- THE LEADER OF THE RE-BELLION INTERROGATES A MOST IMPORTANT PRISONER
SEVEN SUNS OF CINNIBUS, BURNINGIN THE GLOOM-- HEED MY CALL AND BRING YOUR LIGHT HERE INTO THIS ROOM!
DAUGHTER OF DECEIT! DAUGHTER OF TREACH-ERY! YOU MAY BLIND MY EYES AND SEAR MY FLESH, BUT YOU'LL NOT MAKE ME BE-TRAY MY LIEGE!
YOU HAVE MUCH TO LEARN ABOUT THE RE-BELLION, FATHER! WE SEEK TO BANISH SUFFERING ..NOT TO CAUSE IT!
AGAMOTTO'S LIGHT ALL-FREEING, SHINE ON AND NEVER BURN. GRANT YOUR POWER SO ALL-SEEING, THAT I MIGHT SEE--

--AND... LEARN?
CLEA!
WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT DID YOU SEE?
NOTHING, RAHL. I SAW NOTHING. THAT IS WHAT IS WRONG. MY FATHER HAS A DEEP PSYCHIC SHIELD...
...AS STRONG OR STRONGER THAN THOSE I HAVE CONJURED FOR OUR REBEL FORCES... BUT I MUST NOT LET THAT STOP ME! WE MUST LEARN ALL THAT ORIN KNOWS OF UMAR, IF WE ARE TO DEPOSE HER!
HAH-HA-HA! YOU ARE DOOMED TO FAILURE THEN, DAUGHTER! FOR IF YOU COULD PLUMB THE DEPTHS OF MY INNERMOST MIND, YOU WOULD FIND SECRETS THAT SPELL YOUR ULTIMATE DEFEAT!
FAR ACROSS THE DARK DIMENSION, IN THE VERY HEART OF THE MOST POPULOUS REGION, TINY VILLAGES DRIFT PAST ONE ANOTHER IN PATTERNS WHICH WOULD SURELY DRIVE AN EARTH-BORN PHYSICIST MAD.
HERE, THE ORIENTATION OF SKY AND LAND MEANS LITTLE ... AND HABITATION TENDS TO CENTER AROUND A HAPHAZARDLY LOCALIZED PHENOMENON CALLED GRAVITY.

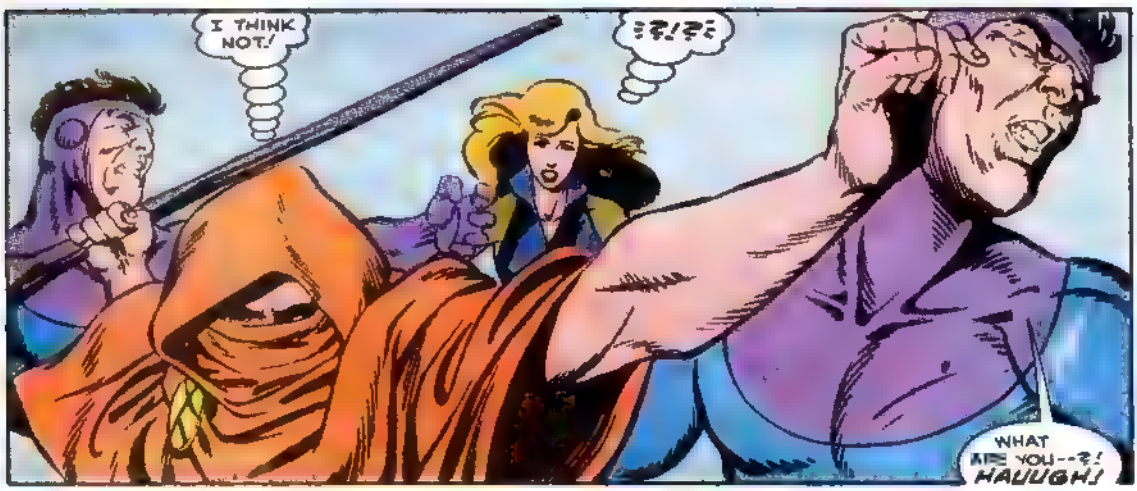
STILL, WHEREVER CERTAIN LIFE-FORMS LIVE TOGETHER, BASIC SIMILARITIES OF LIFESTYLE MAY BE FOUND.
THERE ARE DWELLINGS, SEPARATE AND SHARED.. MERCHANTS AND MARKETPLACES. THERE ARE THOSE WHO ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF CITIZENSHIP--
--AND THOSE WHO DO NOT.
FLAMES OF DORMAMMU, AN OUTCAST! THERE HASN'T BEEN ONE THROUGH HERE IN TWENTY CYCLES!
STAY AWAY FROM HIM, CHILD. YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE HE'S BEEN!
IKONN'S ILLUSIONS. WHAT IS THIS.. SOME SORT OF CAST-IMAGE? WHAT SAY THESE GLYPHS. "BEWARE DOCTOR STRANGE. WANTED FOR ACTS AGAINST THE REALM"
INDEED?
SUDDENLY...
THROW OFF YOUR BONDS! TO DEFY UMAR IS TO BE FREE!
YOU THERE. HALT!
THEY'RE GAINING ON US!
UMAR MUST GO! DOWN WITH UMAR!

BY THE POWER OF THE FLAME, HALT!
SNUFF THE FLAME!
IT WOULD SEEM THAT NO ONE WISHES TO BECOME INVOLVED WITH EITHER THOSE REBELS OR THE ROYAL GUARD. EVERYONE IS DESERTING THE MARKETPLACE..
EVERYONE SAVE THOSE FEW MERCHANTS.
IN THE NAME OF UMAR, YOU ARE ORDERED TO SURRENDER!
IT APPEARS YOU HAVE US CORNERED, BUT APPEARANCES HAVE A WAY OF CHANGING ... NOW!
SNUFF THE FLAME!
MORE OF THEM!
BRING THEM DOWN, BROTHERS AND SISTERS! BRING THEM DOWN!

BUT...
OUR INFORMATION WAS CORRECT.. IT WAS AN AMBUSH!
NOT ANY MORE! GET THE REBEL TRASH!
A DOUBLE-TRAP! WE'VE BEEN SET UP!
THERE ARE STILL ONLY SIX OF THEM TO SIX OF US...AND TWO ARE ALREADY DOWN!
COME ON, YOU REBELS! BRING THEM DOWN!
YOU CANNOT STAND AGAINST US NOW THAT YOU'VE LOST THE SURPRISE, REBELS! WE ARE LINKED DIRECTLY TO THE POWER OF THE REGENT, VIA OUR POWER WANDS!
BAH, ALL REBELS ARE FOOLS!

THIS ONE SEEMS TO BE GIVING THE GROUP ORDERS!
JUST A MOMENT . I RECOGNIZE THIS ONE! SHE WAS ONE OF THE REBELS THAT WERE THROWN TO THE MINDLESS ONES, WHEN WE LOST CAPTAIN ORIN!*
WE HAVE SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU, TRAITOR!
YOU WON'T GET ANY ANSWERS!
TAKE HER AWAY!
*ISSUE #69.

WHU--? IT'S THAT OLD OUTCAST! WHERE'D HE COME FROM?
MOVE ALONG, WRETCHED ONE, OR YOU'LL FORCE US TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF YOU!


I THINK NOT!
?!?!
WHAT ARE YOU--?! HAUUGH!

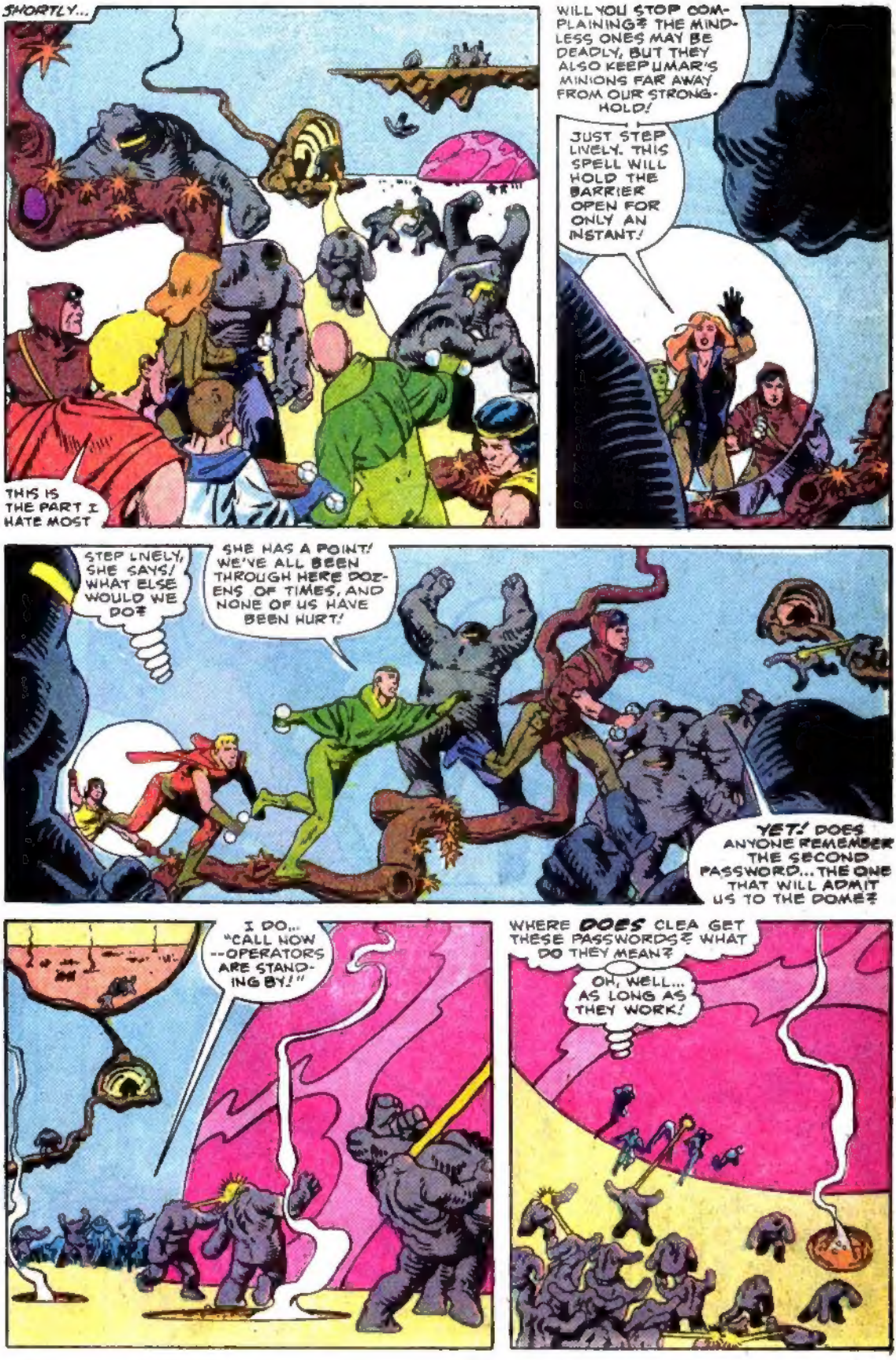
GUARDSMEN! WE'RE BEING ATTACKED BY, AN OUTCAST!
AN OUTCAST?! THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! IT'S FORBIDDEN!
ALL THE MORE REASON TO STOP HIM! COME ON--THE REBELS CAN WAIT!

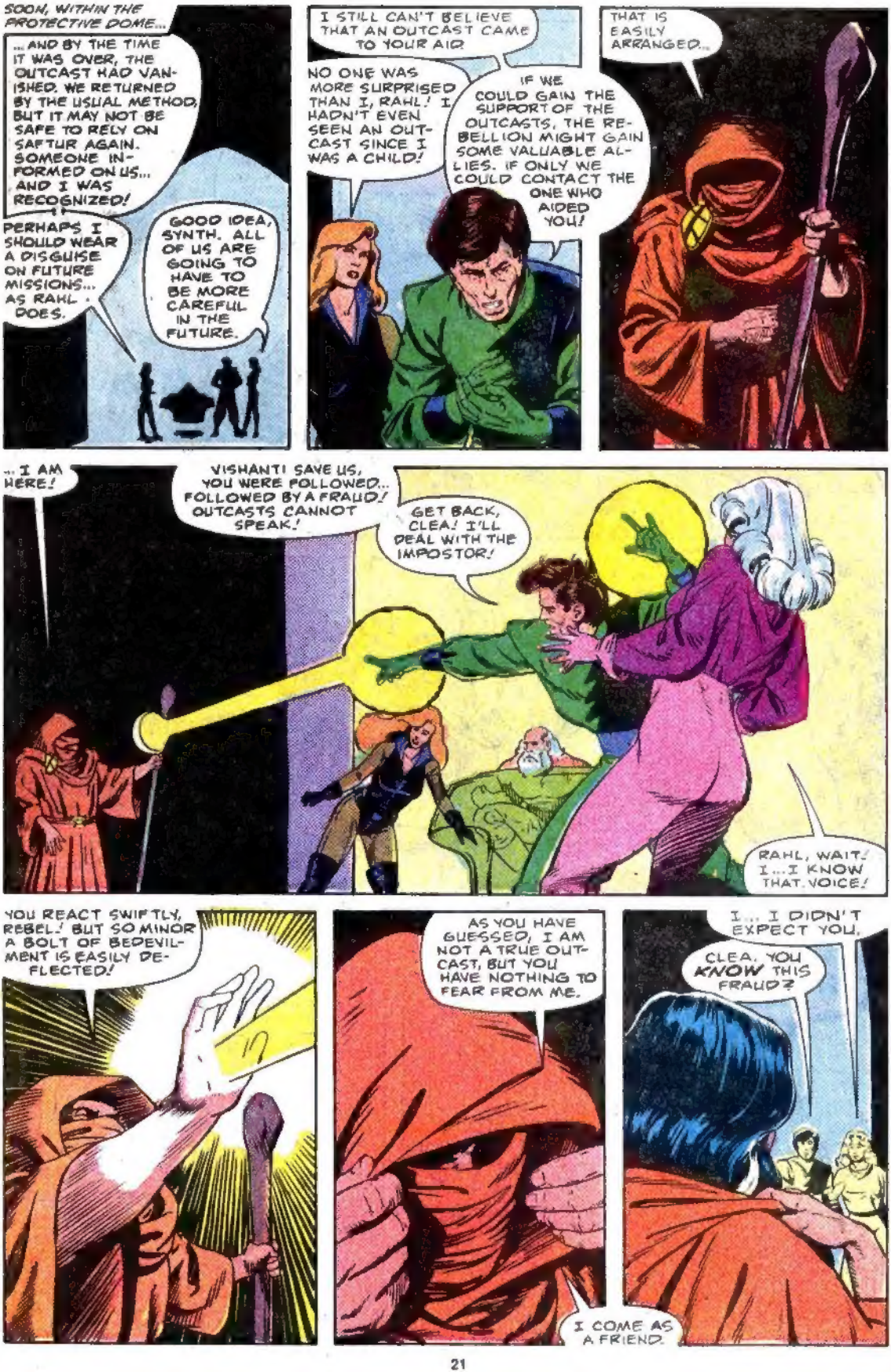
AM , AM I SEEING TH'NGS?
IT'S TRUE! AN OUTCAST IS TAKING ON THE GUARD.. DEFENDING US!

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR, REBELS? LET US HELP THE OUTCAST AS HE'S HELPED US!
THE TIDE HAS TURNED AGAIN! ALL WE NEEDED WAS THAT EXTRA AMOUNT OF SURPRISE!
HAH! NOT SO HIGH AND MIGHTY WITHOUT YOUR POWER WANDS, ARE YOU?
WHAT... WHAT WILL YOU DO TO US?
FIRST, WE'LL MAKE YOU FORGET THAT YOU SAW ME! THEN, WE'LL LET YOU RETURN TO YOUR REGENT IN DISGRACE. I'M SURE UMAR WILL PUNISH YOU FOR YOUR DEFEAT FAR MORE THAN WE WOULD!
WHERE D D THE OUTCAST GO?
HE'S GONE? PERHAPS HE FEARED THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS ACT.
WE SHOULD FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE. THERE ALREADY COULD BE MORE OF THE GUARD ON THE WAY!

LET'S GO, REBELS!
DOWN WITH UMAR! SNUFF THE FLAME!
BUT AS THE REBEL BAND BOLTS THROUGH THE MARKETPLACE...
BE OFF WITH YOU, TRAITORS!
WHAT POSSESSES THEM? THINGS HAVE NEVER BEEN SO GOOD AS THEY ARE UNDER UMAR'S REIGN!
STILL, HERE AND THERE...
YAAA! SNUFF THE FLAME!
BE STILL! WHAT IF SOMEONE SHOULD HEAR?
ONCE AWAY FROM THE CENTER OF THE VILLAGE, THE REBEL CRIES TURN TO WHISPERS, AS THE TINY BAND WINDS ITS WAY DOWN ALLEY-WAYS AND TWISTING LANES
TWICE, THEY SPLIT UP, DOUBLING BACK UPON THEIR TRACKS MANY TIMES TO THROW OFF ANY WHO MIGHT FOLLOW.
THEY ARE GOOD. UMAR HAS REASON TO WORRY.

FINALLY...
NOK-NOK
NOK
NOK-NOK
WHO IS THERE?
"THE PEPSI GENERATION!"
COME IN--QUICKLY! YOU WERE LONG OVERDUE!
WE HAD A BIT OF TROUBLE, SAFTUR, BUT--!
IT WAS NOTHING WE COULDN'T HANDLE. LEAD ON!
I DON'T KNOW WHY I LET MYSELF GET INVOLVED IN THESE INTRIGUES! I'M GETTING TOO OLD FOR SUCH NONSENSE.
AND THOSE MAD PASSWORDS--! A GENERATION I UNDERSTAND ...BUT WHAT IS A "PEPSI"?
HERE WE ARE, YOUNGSTERS. GO IN SAFETY... AND SNUFF THE FLAME!
WHY DID YOU SILENCE ME BACK THERE?
YOU WERE ABOUT TO TELL SAFTUR ABOUT THE OUTCAST... AND THAT MIGHT NOT BE WISE. I WOULD HATE TO THINK HE COULDN'T BE TRUSTED, BUT SOMEONE INFORMED ON US!


SHORTLY...
THIS IS THE PART I HATE MOST
WILL YOU STOP COMPLAINING? THE MINDLESS ONES MAY BE DEADLY, BUT THEY ALSO KEEP UMAR'S MINIONS FAR AWAY FROM OUR STRONGHOLD!
JUST STEP LIVELY. THIS SPELL WILL HOLD THE BARRIER OPEN FOR ONLY AN INSTANT!
STEP LIVELY, SHE SAYS! WHAT ELSE WOULD WE DO?
SHE HAS A POINT! WE'VE ALL BEEN THROUGH HERE DOZENS OF TIMES, AND NONE OF US HAVE BEEN HURT!
YET! DOES ANYONE REMEMBER THE SECOND PASSWORD... THE ONE THAT WILL ADMIT US TO THE DOME?
I DO... "CALL HOW --OPERATORS ARE STANDING BY!"
WHERE DOES CLEA GET THESE PASSWORDS? WHAT DO THEY MEAN?
OH, WELL... AS LONG AS THEY WORK!


SOON, WITHIN THE PROTECTIVE DOME...
...AND BY THE TIME IT WAS OVER, THE OUTCAST HAD VANISHED. WE RETURNED BY THE USUAL METHOD, BUT IT MAY NOT BE SAFE TO RELY ON SAFTUR AGAIN. SOMEONE INFORMED ON US... AND I WAS RECOGNIZED!
PERHAPS I SHOULD WEAR A DISGUISE ON FUTURE MISSIONS... AS RAHL DOES.
GOOD IDEA, SYNTH. ALL OF US ARE GOING TO HAVE TO BE MORE CAREFUL IN THE FUTURE.
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE THAT AN OUTCAST CAME TO YOUR AID!
NO ONE WAS MORE SURPRISED THAN I, RAHL! I HADN'T EVEN SEEN AN OUTCAST SINCE I WAS A CHILD!
IF WE COULD GAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE OUTCASTS, THE REBELLION MIGHT GAIN SOME VALUABLE ALLIES. IF ONLY WE COULD CONTACT THE ONE WHO AIDED YOU!
THAT IS EASILY ARRANGED...
...I AM HERE!
VISHANTI SAVE US, YOU WERE FOLLOWED... FOLLOWED BY A FRAUD! OUTCASTS CANNOT SPEAK!
GET BACK, CLEA! I'LL DEAL WITH THE IMPOSTOR!
RAHL, WAIT! I...I KNOW THAT VOICE!
YOU REACT SWIFTLY, REBEL! BUT SO MINOR A BOLT OF BEDEVILMENT IS EASILY DEFLECTED!
AS YOU HAVE GUESSED, I AM NOT A TRUE OUTCAST, BUT YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM ME.
I COME AS A FRIEND.
I... I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU.
CLEA, YOU KNOW THIS FRAUD?

I DO. HE HAS CHANGED HIS APPEARANCE SOMEWHAT, BUT IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN HAIR TO DECEIVE ME.
RAHL, THIS IS MY FORMER MENTOR... DOCTOR STEPHEN STRANGE!
THE EARTH SORCERER? HERE?!?
DISGUISING YOURSELF AS AN OUTCAST WAS A MASTERSTROKE, STEPHEN. BUT WHY HAVE YOU COME?
PARTLY IN RETURN OF A FAVOR, CLEA. WHEN YOU SENT ME WARNING OF UMAR'S ROLE IN THE ATTACKS I HAD BEEN SUFFERING, IT ENABLED ME TO TAKE STEPS AGAINST THEM. LET US SAY, I OWED YOU ONE.
I HAVE COME TO AID YOUR REBELLION.
ISSUE #69
YOUR SUPPORT WILL DO NO GOOD, EARTHMAN! UMAR ALREADY THINKS YOU ARE PART OF THE REBELLION! NO FOREIGN SORCERER WILL TOPPLE UMAR FROM THE AZURE THRONE!
IN THAT YOU MAY BE RIGHT, ORINI! BUT I DON'T INTEND TO!
FROM WHAT LITTLE I HAVE SEEN OF THE REBELS IN ACTION, I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THEY HAVE SPIRIT ENOUGH TO END UMAR'S TYRANNY. ALL THEY NEED IS TIME... AND PERHAPS A BIT OF HELP.
AFTER ALL THE TROUBLE YOU HAVE TAKEN TO FIND US, I COULD HARDLY TURN DOWN YOUR OFFER, BUT AS I TOLD YOU WHEN I LEFT EARTH, THIS IS NOT YOUR FIGHT.
UMAR MADE IT MY FIGHT.
YOU SAID YOU CAME *PARTLY* TO RETURN MY FAVOR. WHAT ELSE BROUGHT YOU?
I'M NOT CERTAIN. I WAS SOME TIME GETTING OVER YOUR LEAVING ME, CLEA. PERHAPS I WANTED TO SEE IF I STILL FELT ANYTHING...
AND DO YOU?
DO *YOU*?